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SUBJECT: CHARGE MEETS WITH IRAQI NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
MWAFAQ AL-RUBAI

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4

(a),
(b), and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with Charge, Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubai expressed optimism that a constitution will be drafted and ratified on time, expressed his opinion that the insurgency will be long and difficult and must be countered with means other than security assets, discussed the difficulties with launching an amnesty program, and urged continued USG pressure to maintain high standards on human rights. Rubai also addressed the hot button issue of de-Ba'athification. He believes that for Iraq to defeat the insurgency and to construct a viable democracy with strong, survivable institutions Iraq's leaders must put old divisions aside and promote an "Iraq First" policy, a step that will take much courage. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Charge, accompanied by Political Counselor and Acting PolMil Counselor called on Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubai at his office on July 7, 2005. Charge expressed the gratitude of the Mission and MNF-I for the role Rubai has agreed to take in the government. He emphasized how critical it is for the Mission to have a partner in the government to deal with on political and security issues and expressed confidence that Rubai is the right person for the job. Charge assured Rubai that he has our full support and told him he should not hesitate to ask us for any support he needs to do his job.

BULLISH ON THE CONSTITUTION

3. (C) Rubai thanked the Charge and the President for making the commitment, paid for dearly in blood and treasure, to liberate Iraq and to launch a new trend of democracy in the Middle East. He acknowledged that the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) has many, many serious problems to face, but expressed confidence that they are on the right track. He observed that the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) had started with "less than zero", and accomplished a major victory with the elections of January 30. On that day the people of Iraq said "yes" to the first truly elected government in the history of the country. Rubai is optimistic about the prospects for the constitution, noting that the Sunnis have now been included in the process and that signs from the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) are also encouraging. He predicts the constitution will be ratified by October and is confident it will be written in a way that will make it impossible for anyone to veto. When asked whether he believes the Sunni delegates will participate throughout the drafting process, he replied yes. The Sunnis, he explained, are chastising themselves for not participating in the democratic process during the elections and realize that they have paid a price. As a result, he strongly believes they will not desert the process again.

THOUGHTS ON THE INSURGENCY

4. (C) Rubai stated that in his view the insurgency, which he termed "very sophisticated," will now begin to follow Irish Republican Army tactics. That is, there will be a somewhat acceptable political arm and, at the same time, an active and violent military wing. In addition, he said that until recently he would have described the insurgency as an "armed Sunni insurgency." Now he would describe it as "an armed insurgency within the Sunni community." He stated the obvious when he told Charge that for the Sunnis, the insurgency is all about regaining the power they have lost, more so than simply destroying "traitors." He mentioned that just the prior day, an arson fire had been started on the fifth floor of his government building in the office of the Director General in charge of de-Ba'athification. For generations the accepted paradigm in Iraq has been one in which it was the will of God that the Sunnis should rule. It was a well-established system where one group dominated the other. That has been turned on its head. When the Sunnis lost their power, they lost with it all the privileges that flowed from it. This turn of events is so unthinkable to them that the idea of ruling through partnerships or consensus is totally foreign.

15. (C) To overcome this obstacle to democracy, it is necessary to change the Sunni mindset by assuring them that their rights will be protected by the constitution. "If we can in the constitution secure the rights of minorities and give them a veto power over their fates they will participate in the process." When asked how he thought this could be accomplished he replied that this might be possible by having a second or upper chamber in the legislature that would give minorities enough representation to veto laws that threaten their interests. In addition, there has to be an answer to the question of what is Iraq. He mused that the country has lost its identity, which must be redefined. Before Saddam's fall, Iraq was an Arab state. Today, there is a place in it for Kurds and others who are not Arabs. This is an almost impossible concept for some to grasp.

16. (C) With regard to the future of the insurgency, Rubai believes Iraq must prepare for a long, drawn out fight. He also acknowledged that it must be fought by education as well as by security means, and derided those in the government afflicted with what he termed "short-termism syndrome." He said many of his colleagues are kidding themselves because they believe they can solve the problems laid before them in six weeks. He also believes that to defeat the insurgency, resources must be expended in areas other than in the security field. Approaching the problem on the single track of "security" is like having tunnel vision. Rubai also observed that building institutions is just as critical as building a government. The institutional framework has suffered because everyone is preoccupied by simply getting elected and holding power. The institutions that are being built today by the ITG must be strong enough to remain in place though changes of government so that they will remain constant, no matter whom the Prime Minister may be. He lamented that much time has been lost as, to date, almost everyone has tended to focus solely on the security issues. To defeat the insurgency, then, Iraq must have both political and economic development, coupled with politicians brave enough to make tough choices, a commodity in short supply.

THE ISSUE OF AMNESTY

17. (C) With regard to amnesty, Rubai acknowledged the ITG is working on a comprehensive plan to address this issue. In the short term the purpose of amnesty would be for political gain, in the long term for peace. He is considering an idea whereby detainees would be released immediately in return for a written promise. This process would be watched and evaluated to see what impact it has on altering the behavior of others. Rubai explained that one big problem for Iraqis with the idea of amnesty is defining who is being talked about. For example, in the insurgency the fighters are either Iraqis, Arabs from other countries, or other foreigners. However, in Iraqi culture it is ingrained in the mind that there is no distinction between an Iraqi and an Arab from elsewhere. Therefore, to Iraqis, when one says "foreign fighters" Arabs from other nations are not included. The terms therefore need to be carefully defined, a step, Rubai opined, that will take great courage.

THE NEED TO SHOWCASE SUCCESS

18. (C) Charge advised Rubai that the people of Iraq need to be shown that progress is being made, specifically that the Iraqi security forces are being trained and are gradually taking over from Coalition Forces. Rubai acknowledged that lack of confidence in Iraqi forces is a real problem that causes insecurity among the public. He confided that everyone involved with the imminent return of the Convention Center and other portions of the International Zone to the Iraqis and the Red Zone is nervous about this prospect, including the Prime Minister. The fact remains, however, that there are cities under Iraqi control where relative peace prevails. And the plan is to stand up more and more Iraqi units in the next year so that Coalition Forces can be pulled out of cities. Charge emphasized this must be done in a manner that makes it loud and clear to the population that the Iraqi government is successfully taking responsibility for its own people.

HUMAN RIGHTS, DE-BA'ATHIFICATION

19. (C) Charge pointed out that as Iraqi security forces begin to assume more responsibilities on their own, the Sunni population must be assured that they are being protected from the government and the Shias. Many Sunnis are convinced that purges of their people are taking place in government ministries and steps must be taken to alleviate these fears. In addition, Sunnis feel that the MNF-I and ISF are directing their campaigns at the Sunni community as a whole. Rubai

agreed and urged the USG to continue to emphasize respect for human rights as the Sunnis must gain confidence that the old way of doing things are gone. The Charge responded that he agrees, but pointed out there is no single contact in the ITG for us to address our human rights concerns.

110. (C) With regard to de-Ba'athification, the Charge emphasized to Rubai that this program is causing such distrust and anxiety in the Sunni community that it must be moderated. Rubai responded that the TNA is leading this effort and that feelings are quite strong. However, he had three major modifications to suggest. The first is to suggest that de-Ba'athification be pursued by province, and that the three Sunni provinces be exempted. His second proposal would be to declare the Ba'ath Party a terrorist organization as of a certain date. Those who remain active members beyond that date will be held accountable for provable individual acts, not mere membership in the organization. Those who were simply members before the date would not have a problem. He believes this idea can be sold in the south, but acknowledges that the Kurds would have a difficult time accepting this plan. His third suggestion is to look at the Ba'ath Party in a different way. Many of the basic tenants of the party focus on Arab nationalism, which in and of itself may be a legitimate political inclination. Stripping away or declaring illegal ideologies that people have spent most of their lives believing in will only serve to alienate them further. So what needs to be done is to draw the distinction between acceptable ideologies that were part of the Ba'ath platform and the perverted, extremist version that Saddam perpetuated. In other words, people should be punished for specific bad acts, not mere membership. Whether his suggestions are adopted or not, Rubai believes that the message must be unmistakably made that the Ba'ath Party of Saddam Hussein is a thing of the past.

LEADERSHIP COUNTS

111. (C) Rubai concluded the meeting by emphasizing that in his view the leadership of the country must be able to clearly enunciate an "Iraq First" message that will reassure all factions that the days where one group dominates another are over. He acknowledges how difficult this will be and that brave steps will be necessary to transition Iraq into a democratic and peaceful society.

COMMENT

112. (C) Rubai is an engaging interlocutor who shows the intellectual abilities to think outside the normal Iraqi box. The question is, can his views be appreciated by his contemporaries in the government and by the public at large? His appeal for brave leadership to advance an "Iraq First" policy may ring hollow among his countrymen who do not have the ability to put historic ethnic and religious strife behind them. Another possible concern is Rubai's tendency to alienate colleagues and superiors who find his style challenging or overly ambitious. He fell from grace with IIG Prime Minister Allawi, who found him overreaching. He plans to attend the Joint Commission on Reconstruction and Economic Development meetings in Amman in the coming days and deliver a speech on economic matters, a subject not necessarily directly related to his portfolio as National Security Advisor, a fact that might raise the eyebrows of his critics. Nevertheless, Rubai is forward thinking and well placed to move the ITG forward on the security front. He has developed very good working relationships with Embassy staff and with GEN Casey and the MNF-I leadership. We are hopeful that he will energize the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) process for which he is responsible and that Prime Minister Ja'afari is capable of delegating the necessary powers to give him a running chance at success. End Comment.

113. (U) REO HILLAH, REO BASRAH, REO KIRKUK, REO MOSUL minimize considered.

Satterfield